BOOK REVIEW

Writing to Improve Healthcare: An Author’s Guide to Scholarly Publication
by David P Stevens

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Quality improvement has become a part of medical practice, certification, and education, and if you are looking for advice on how to introduce your findings and interventions to your departments or to publish them, look no further than David P Stevens’s Writing to Improve Healthcare: An Author’s Guide to Scholarly Publication. Although traditional scientific research in medicine adheres to standards and methodology in scholarly publication, publication of quality improvement and innovations is less established. The dissemination of quality improvement research and analysis helps the medical community stay current in knowledge of innovation, provide positive health outcomes, and decrease waste in health services. In Writing to Improve Healthcare, Stevens proclaims that health care improvement is incomplete until it is published, and he provides a unique guide to publication for this new category of writers.

An adjunct professor at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice (Lebanon, NH) and editor emeritus of the British Medical Journal Quality & Safety in Healthcare, Stevens has vast experience in teaching and publishing health care improvement. This experience allows him to give the reader an insightful but succinct history of quality improvement publications and research, as well as in the development of publishing guidelines, such as the Standards for QUality Improvement Reporting Excellence (SQUIRE).

The book provides best practices on how to turn quality improvement into scholarly contributions. Stevens dispenses specific advice regarding important topics such as the value of writing style, coauthor collaboration, and peer review, and how they relate specifically to writing to motivate change in health care. Writing to Improve Healthcare is not a mere description of an intervention—it encompasses the study of the intervention itself, the rationale behind it, and the application of the intervention to other health care settings.

Recognizing that health care improvements are realized through contextual features such as culture, leadership, and connectivity, Stevens stresses the importance of reporting on context in health care writing. For readers and quality improvement writers to apply and report on improvements in their own context, they must understand the circumstances under which the improvements were carried out. Stevens further acknowledges that the heterogeneous study settings in which improvement initiatives are conducted diverge from traditional biomedical research, and he provides information on where to find resources on statistical methods to establish validity.

Finally, Stevens shares tips on the submission process to a journal, including what to consider when selecting a journal. Overall, Writing to Improve Healthcare draws a roadmap from health care innovation to scholarly contribution and offers a practical reference guide along each step of the way.

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